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ABSTRACT

In Australian two-way immersion programs approximately 20-40% of instruction takes place in the target language. While much has been written about such programs targeting French and German, little has been written about Japanese immersion programs. The aim of this research is to provide a better understanding of children's second language development in partial immersion programs in the Australian context. The following questions are addressed in this study: What is the nature of young children's discourse in immersion classes? and When, for what purposes, and what types of second language (L2) utterances do young children produce in immersion classrooms? Naturalistic data were collected from science classes from lower grade levels. Young children's L2 utterances are first examined quantitatively and are further analyzed qualitatively in relation to interaction with their teachers and peers. Twenty-four children, ages five through seven participated in this study. It is found that most of the children's utterances were formulaic expressions or one- or two-word statements. (Contains 21 references.) (KFT)

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A study of children's early oral production in the target language in Japanese immersion classrooms

Introduction

In Australia, immersion programs at schools have expanded over the past two decades, developing their own models which are in the main partial immersion where approximately 20% to 40% of the school curriculum is taught in the target language. Japanese immersion programs were introduced in 1998 at three Victorian primary schools funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET). All children at these schools learn 30% of the school curriculum (7.5 hours per week), including key learning areas, such as Science, Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE), Arts, Physical Education and LOTE in Japanese.

While quite extensive research has been conducted on German and French programs (cf. Clyne 1986; Berthold 1995; Clyne et al. 1995; Fernandez 1996; de Jabrun 1997; de Courcy 1997; de Courcy et al. 1999; Tisdell 1999), which confirm the immersion approach as an effective form of second language (L2) promotion in Australian settings, very little study has been undertaken to date on Japanese immersion programs in Australia. Japanese has far more linguistically different features in comparison to European languages for English-speaking students in terms of grammatical, lexical and

orthographic features. Therefore, it is important to study Japanese immersion programs in their own right to assist the future development of these programs.

In addition, although research on immersion programs' effects on learners' L2 oral proficiency has been studied and documented, much of the research has been test-oriented and the focus has been upon individual learners' linguistic proficiency, such as grammatical accuracy, syntactic development, and pronunciation. Consequently, we have little knowledge about the features and development of learners' L2 as used in a natural setting, such as an immersion classroom.

L2 development also needs to be captured within a broader perspective taking into consideration the multi-faceted nature of interactive skills. For example, learners' strategic competence which refers to the ability to overcome communication difficulties, pragmatic skills to negotiate and convey meaning, and also learners' spontaneity and creativity in using L2 have not been investigated sufficiently in immersion research to date. In order to gain a fuller picture of the L2 development of immersion learners, not only linguistic viewpoints but also these interactive aspects need to be examined.

The present study investigated the Japanese early partial immersion program at a Victorian primary school in Melbourne. The school consists of

two campuses and all the children at one campus participate in the immersion program. The subjects taught in Japanese at the junior level in 2001 are Physical Education, including Perceptual Motor Program (PMP), Visual Art, Science and LOTE.

The aim of my research is to provide a greater understanding of children's L2 development in partial immersion programs in the Australian context. The question addressed in this study is: What is the nature of young children's discourse in immersion classrooms? When, for what purposes and what types of L2 utterances do young children produce in immersion classrooms? Naturalistic data was collected from Science classes of lower grade levels. Young children's L2 utterances are firstly examined quantitatively, and are further analyzed qualitatively in relation to interaction with their teachers and peers.

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study are 24 children with ages ranging from five to seven years. They are all in the preparatory, grades one or two at the school. At the time of the investigation, 12 children in the preparatory class had been learning in the program for three months, eight grade one children had been in the program for one year and three months, and four grade two children had two years and three months of experience. There are two

children in the preparatory class who have one Japanese parent, however, in both cases their home language is English. None of the other children had experience of exposure to Japanese before entering the program.

In this study, one immersion teacher and one assistant teacher were included. These teachers were both female, native Japanese-speakers.

Data Collection Procedures

Naturalistic data was collected by audio- and video- recordings of 90 minutes duration in two immersion classes for Science. The classes consisted of a preparatory class and a composite class of grades one and two (Grades 1/2). The class content was the same for the two classes on the day when the data was collected. A tape-recorder was placed close to the teacher and the video-camera followed the teacher and the children who were near the teacher. This method was chosen as I had previously observed on several occasions that the L2 utterances produced by the children had in the main occurred in the teacher-directed activities and in their interaction with the teacher.

Data Analysis

In order to conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis in depth, all utterances produced by the children and teachers were transcribed. Private talk produced by the children in English which was not relevant to the class content was, however, excluded. All transcribed utterances of the

children were firstly coded according to the framework of Clyne's "production phases" in order to examine the children's syntactic development of Japanese language (Clyne 1986; Clyne et al. 1995). Clyne's framework postulated the following phases:

> Phase 0: Responses only in English (although comprehension may be fairly well developed);
>
> Phase 1: One- or two-word L2 sentences, unanalyzed and formulaic responses, the rest in English;
>
> Phase 1a: The entire discourse is in English but pronounced with the L2 pronunciation;
>
> Phase 2: The matrix language of the discourse is English, but individual L2 items, for example, nouns, noun phrases, uninflected adjectives, or infinitives, are transferred;
>
> Phase 3: An attempt is made to speak L2, with frequent code-switching to L1 within sentences, as well as patterns to integrate English words into L2;
>
> Phase 4: The matrix language of the discourse is clearly L2, but occasionally English words are transferred, and sometimes integrated into the L2 phonological and/or grammatical system, as occurs by bilinguals in Australia. (Clyne et al. 1995:31-32)

Further, in order to discover the types of the children's L2 utterances in actual use in the classroom context, their L2 utterances were classified according to the Kanagy and Igarashi's coding system for types of

utterances (Kanagy and Igarashi 1997). This classification covers whether the utterance is (1) formulaic or original, (2) repetition of the previous utterance or non-repetition and (3) elicited or voluntary. Original (non-formulaic) utterances are concerned with varied form and content. This type of utterance also includes the prescribed expressions which are utilized by the children spontaneously in a different context to the original one where these were first learned. Kanagy and Igarashi's framework provides a different way of examining the development of children's L2 oral production in immersion education. The data will be compared with the findings from my previous research, where relevant (cf. Hagino 2000).

The children's utterances were further examined qualitatively in relation to the context and interaction with the teacher and peers in order to discover when and for what purposes they produce L2.

Results and discussion

Quantity of total number of utterances

Table 1 shows the number of utterances produced by the teacher and children both in Japanese and English. As the table indicates, the Science class created an environment for a large amount of verbal interaction between the teacher and the children, and between peers. A large number of utterances and interaction amongst the participants was also seen in several observations in the science classes undertaken prior to this data being collected. The total number of utterances in the Science classes,

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which was 422 for the preparatory class and 419 for the Grades 1/2 class, was much greater than the data taken from two lower grade classes for Art (147 to 198) and PMP (314 to 349) (Hagino 2000). In particular, the children in the Grades 1/2 class produced a large number of utterances (193).

Table 1: Utterances of children and teachers

Subject	Grade	Total number of utterances	Child utterances		Teacher utterances	
			N	%	N	%
Science	Prep.	422	148	35.1	274	64.9
	G1/2	419	193	46.1	226	53.9

Table 1 also indicates that the teacher in the preparatory class spoke more than in the Grades 1/2 class, while the children talked more in the G1/2 class. In my research in 2000, it was also observed that the class which included the second year children produced more utterances than the class which consisted of only the first year children. This appears to indicate that the children become more active in discourse in their second or third year of the immersion program.

Quantity of utterances in Japanese and English

It is also evident, however, that the children produced a large number of L1 utterances as well as L2 utterances (cf. Table 2). This is a significant difference to the findings from the investigation in 2000, where the number and the proportion of L2 utterances produced by the children were found to be significantly greater than their L1 utterances (Hagino 2000). This difference may be related to the characteristics of the subject. In the

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Science classes, the teacher posed a number of open-ended questions, such as "What is this?" "What does it smell like?" "Why do you think so?" and "What happened?", while she instructed the children with more closed-questions in LOTE, Art and PMP. Consequently, the children were engaged in classroom discourse to a greater extent in the Science classes, producing a number of questions and comments. This factor may have effected the greater use of English by the children whose L2 skills were still undeveloped in order to express their ideas and opinions.

Table 2: Child utterances in Japanese/English

Subject	Grade	Total number of utterances	Japanese utterances N	%	English utterances N	%
Science	Prep.	148	83	56.1	65	43.9
	G1/2	192	110	57.0	83	43.0

The children actually produced a number of comments in English when they were enthusiastic to describe what was happening and to exchange their ideas during the experiment. For example, in the preparatory class at the time when the teacher poured some cream into a container, the children guessed what it was and advanced various ideas in English:

1. T: *Hai iku yo. Hai, iku yo. Min'na mitete yo.*

   'Here we go, here we go. Everyone, look at this.'

   ((Teacher started pouring cream into a container, while all children watched.))
2. C1: Milk?
3. T: *A! // A! Nagareteru ne-:. hora.*

   'Look! Look! It's running down, isn't it?'
4. C1: Milk?

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5. C2: NO, it isn't.

6. T: *Gyuunyuu ka naa?*
'Is this milk? Really?'

7. T: *Gyuunyuu ka na?*
'Is this really milk?'

8. C1: WHAT is it?

9. T: *Un, nan daroo?*
'Well, what would this be?'

10. C3: Milk!

11. C4: Milk or cream.

12. C1: She tasted it.

13. T: *Nan daroo? Wakaru?*
'I wonder what this is. Do you know?'

14. C4: Milk or cream.

15. T: *Wakaru hito?*
'Is there anyone who knows?'
((Some children raised their hands.))

16. T: *Hai, ja (name) kun. Ajimi shite.*
'Ok, (name). Try to taste it.'
((The child declined to try to taste it by shaking his head.))

17. T: *Ja, (name) kun ajimi shite.*
'Well, then can you try it, (name)?'

18. T: *Gyuunyuu ka naa? Kuriimu ka na? Nan daroo?*
'Is this milk, or cream? What is it?'
((This child also declined to try to taste it by shaking his head.))

19. T: *Ja, (name) chan ajimi shite.*
So, what about (name)? Try it.
((She tried.))

20. T: *Nani? Nan desu ka? Gyuunyuu?*
'What? What is it? Is it milk?'

21. C5: *Gyuunyuu?*
'Milk?'

22. T: *Gyuunyuu? Hontoo?*
'Milk? Are you sure?'

23. T: *Koku koku koku tte nonde ii?*
'Can I drink it like this?'

((Teacher pretended to drink it.))

24.T: *Nani? (name) chan. Nan desu ka?*

'What is this? (name), what is this?'

\# 25.C6: *Gyuunyuu.*

'Milk?'

26.T: *Gyuunyuu? Hontoo?*

'Milk? really?'

\# 27.C7: *Gyuunyuu?*

"Milk?'

Until utterance number 21, the children kept using English to state their opinions. The teacher did not interrupt the children who were talking in English, although she continued talking to the children in Japanese. Finally, the child C5 produced a Japanese utterance repeating the word "*gyuunyuu* (milk)" (cf. line 21), then a different child, C6, produced the same word again (cf. line 25) as an original utterance. However, when they finally found out it was cream, they became excited and switched to English again, saying "Cream, cream!'. A similar flow of discourse was also observed in the Grades 1/2 class in the same situation.

It was also often observed that the children used English to confirm the teacher's instruction in both classes. The following is an example that occurred in the preparatory class:

1. T: *Ja mazu ichiban ni iro o nutte kudasai.*

   'Well, first of all, please colour it in.'

2. Children (several): Colour in.

3. T: *Iro o nutte, hai, nibanme, kitte kudasai.*

'Yes, colour in. Secondly, please cut it.'

4. C1: Cut.

5. T: *Hai, kitte. Hai, sanban, hatte kudasai.*

'Yes, cut it. OK, thirdly, please stick it.'

6. C1 and C2: *Hatte kudasai.*

'Please stick it.'

7. C3: Stick it.

8. T: *Hai, (name) chan. hatte kudasai.*

'Yes, (name). Please stick it.'

As the discourse shows, the teacher usually accepts the children's confirmation in English by responding *"Hai* (yes, that's right)", although she always provides the Japanese expression again. The children sometimes repeat the teacher's instruction spontaneously, as is evident in line six above. However, it may be advised that the teacher should encourage the children to repeat her Japanese instruction to a greater extent, rather than merely providing them with her continuous input. By doing so, the children could intake these particular expressions with the actual meaning. Once the children know their understanding is right by hearing the teacher's response, *'hai* (that's right)', their interest appears to go on to the next stage rather than focusing on the language which the teacher provides.

Because of the characteristics of content-based programs where the focus is on the meaning rather than on linguistic factors, the focus shifts quickly

from L2 to the content once the meaning is conveyed between the teacher and the children (Clyne 1986). Immersion teachers thus need continuous effort to encourage the children to produce L2 utterances.

Syntactic development

As was the case with the findings of my previous research and in the studies by Clyne (1986), Clyne et al.(1995) and Kanagy and Igarashi (1997), most of the children's L2 utterances in the Science classes were found to belong to phase one where one or two words, or formulaic and unanalyzed expressions are used (cf. Table 3). This tendency appears to be quite natural for young children in immersion classes. One or two words are often sufficient to convey their meaning, as even one word can have a range of functions and fulfill the children's purposes in interaction with the teacher who is skilled at comprehending the children's intention.

Only three utterances of the Grades 1/2 class fall into phase two where the learners generate utterances in L1 and slot in L2 vocabulary. There were no phase two utterances found in the preparatory class. In my previous investigation, there were between three to five phase-two utterances in the class of the first year children of the program. This difference may be related to their length of experience in the program. The children in the previous study had seven months of experience of the program, whereas the children in this study had been in the program for only three months.

The other reason for this difference can be the lexical items used in the Science classes. My previous research investigated the PMP and LOTE classes. While a number of familiar words and patterns were used in these classes, a range of new lexical items were brought and used in more complex contexts in the Science classes. This may have influenced the children to try slotting the lexical items into their English sentences. No phase three utterances were found in either the preparatory and Grade 1/2 classes.

Table 3: Production Phases

Phases 0 to 4

		0 N (%)	1 N (%)	1a N (%)	2 N (%)	3 N (%)	4 N (%)	Total N (%)
Science	P	65 (43.9%)	79 (53.4%)	4 (2.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	148 (100%)
	1/2	83 (43.0%)	99 (51.3%)	5 (2.6%)	3 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (1.6%)	193 (100%)

In phase four, the matrix language of the discourse is clearly L2. In this research, the Grades 1/2 class produced three phase-four utterances. These utterances are as follows:

- T: *Kyoo no tenki wa doo desu ka?* 'How is the weather, today?'

  C: *Hare desu.* 'It is fine.'

- T: (name)*kun, ii desu ka?* '(Name), are you listening?'

  C: *Hai, ii desu.* 'Yes, I am fine. / I am listening.'

- ((While the class was discussing whether the object was cream or not.))

  C: *Gyuunyuu no nioi.* 'smell of milk'

In these utterances, the children employed the patterns " ~ *desu* (It is ~/ I am ~)", and " A *no* B (B of A) ". These are basic structures of Japanese sentences or phrases. The matrix language of these productions is clearly Japanese. However, the above productions seem to have emerged from their formulaic expressions or the patterns used by the teacher repeatedly in the class, therefore it is not clear if the children used analytical skills or not in order to produce these original utterances. Hence, these productions may fall into the category of phase one. However, this finding tends to indicate that the children in immersion classes can produce syntactically correct sentences or phrases, which have been influenced by formulaic expressions or patterns repeatedly used. Although many scholars claimed that form-focused teaching should be incorporated in L2 education (cf. Harley and Swain 1984; Swain 1985; Clyne 1986; Clyne et al. 1995; Lyster 1992; Day and Shapson 1996; Long and Robinson 1998; de Courcy 1999), it is also important to investigate how and to what extent natural acquisition of the linguistic code occurs with immersion children without explicit form learning.

There were also several utterances which may fall into phase four, but which were classified into phase one as these utterances were produced as repetitions of the teacher's utterance. In such cases, the children voluntarily repeated the teacher's Japanese sentences. Such productions may not fall into the category of phase four as they have not been analyzed. However, this is an indication of the children's early stage of producing

extended L2 discourse.

In my previous and present studies, overall, the syntactic skill of L2 appears to be underdeveloped with young children in the first one to two years of the partial immersion program. However, some children were observed to start producing a sentence rather than one word, employing the pattern or formulaic expressions as their original utterance in their second year of the program. It can be said that formulaic expressions and repetition of particular patterns would assist the immersion children to extend their own expressions, employing the appropriate linguistic code to a limited extent.

These findings also suggest that although Clyne's framework provides a useful mapping for children's interlanguage development from English to Japanese, there should also be other perspectives to examine immersion children's L2 utterances in the early stages, which mainly consist of one-word and formulaic utterances. The young children produced mostly single-word utterances in immersion classes in order to participate in class activities and to accomplish their tasks. This leads me to the question: how, for what purposes and what types of L2 utterances do they produce in immersion classrooms.

Types of L2 utterances

a. Formulaic or original

As Table 4 below indicates, in the Science classes, the children produced

19% (in preparatory) and 29% (in Grade 1/2) of original utterances which were much higher than the results from my previous research (Hagino 2000). It can be assumed that the nature of the Science classes would have stimulated the children to try out their own L2 to convey their meanings in comparison with other subjects, such as PMP, Art and LOTE which were investigated in 2000.

Table 4: Form (Formulaic / Original)

Subject	Grade	Total number of L2 utterances	Formulaic		Original	
			N	%	N	%
Science	Prep.	83	67	80.7	16	19.3
	G1/2	110	78	70.9	32	29.1

The data also reveals that the Grade 1/2 class produced more original utterances than did the preparatory class. This can be an indication that the children with experience in the program for about one or two years have developed L2 skills to convey their own meaning to a certain extent, even though they employed only one or two words.

Furthermore, based on the data, three types of original utterances were found in the children's L2 production. The first type involves an utterance which the children produced voluntarily in order to convey their own meaning. This type seems to have the largest number of their original utterances. For example, one child in the preparatory class counted the number of the children in Japanese when they sat on the mat. On the same occasion, an other child said to the peer next to her, who was kneeling up in front of her, "*Suwatte, suwatte*" which means "Sit down, sit down".

The second type of original utterance is also a voluntary utterance, but it employed the part or whole of the previous utterance of the teacher or peer. The following is an example of such discourses produced in the Grades 1/2 class:

1. T: *Jaa, min'na, ii desu ka? Maru ni natte moraemasu ka? Ookina maru tsukutte kudasai.*

   'OK, everyone, are you ready? Can you please make a circle? Please make a big circle.'

2. C1: *Ookina maru.*

   'A big circle.'

3. T: *Are? Kore maru desu ka?*

   'What? Is this a circle?'

4. C2: *MARU-:*

   'A CIRCLE!'

The child C1 picked up the key words, "*ookina maru* (a big circle)" and simply repeated them. However, C2 said "*MARU-:* (a circle)" loudly to her peers to urge them to make a circle properly.

The third type refers to the utterance which was elicited by the teacher. For example, the teacher asked the children saying "*Kore wa nan desu ka?* (What is this?)" showing a glass of cream, and one child immediately answered "*Nori* (glue)". This type of original utterance was also often

produced.

b. Repetition or non-repetition

As Table 5 shows, non-repetitive utterances were more dominant than repetitive ones in the older group of children, while there was little difference in the proportion between repetition and non-repetition in the younger group. In my previous study, I found a large proportion of non-repetitive utterances in the LOTE and PMP classes (68% to 83%) where the children had been in the same program between seven months and one year and seven months. Thus, it seems to indicate that non- repetition becomes a larger part of the young children's L2 after three months of participation in the program.

Table 5: Spontaneity (Repetition / Non-repetition)

Subject	Grade	Total number of L2 utterances	Repetition		Non-repetition	
			N	%	N	%
Science	Prep.	83	45	54.2	38	45.8
	G1/2	110	36	32.7	74	67.3

Table 6 shows further examination of the children's repetitions based on whether they were elicited or voluntary. According to Table 6, it is clear that the children produced repetitions more voluntarily rather than being elicited. It is particularly evident in the case of the preparatory children where the ratio of voluntary repetition is 80%, which is significantly high. Accordingly, it can be said that the preparatory children repeated what was

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said to a large extent, however most of their repetition was produced spontaneously. A large proportion of voluntary repetition by the first year children was also evident in the investigation in my previous research. Thus, repetition may be one of the important keys for the immersion children in order to participate in their classes and to acquire L2 in their first year of experience.

Table 6: Spontaneity of Repetition Utterances
(Elicited repetition or Voluntary repetition)

Subject	Grade	Total number of repetition	Elicited repetition N	%	Voluntary repetition N	%
Science	Prep.	45	9	20.0	36	80.0
	G1/2	36	11	30.6	25	69.4

It should be noted that spontaneity in repeating the teacher's utterances was often observed, especially with the children who were enthusiastic to participate in class activities and to use L2 for interaction with the teacher and peers. They often picked up the key words from the teacher's instruction and repeated them spontaneously. For example:

1. T: *Ookina maru tsukutte kudasai.*
2. C1: *Ookina maru.* (Grades1/2)

'a big circle.'

1. T: *Kuriimu o iremasu.*

'We put some cream in.'

2. C1: *Kuriimu o iremasu.* (Grades 1/2)

'We put some cream in.'

·1. T: *Hai, ii desu ka? A! mada mada mada.*

'OK, are you ready? Oh! not yet, not yet, not yet.'

2. C1: *Mada mada mada* (prep.)

'not yet, not yet, not yet'

When the children repeated the teacher's utterances, their productions were very natural and fluent. Repetition thus seems to play an important role in immersion classrooms enabling the young children to participate in the class activities and also to acquire L2. Kanagy also pointed out the importance of repetition which assists the children in developing interactional competence (Kanagy 1999: 1490).

c. Elicited or Voluntary

Quite a large amount of voluntary speech was evident in the Science classes. As Table 7 presents, the children in the Grades 1/2 class produced more voluntary speech than the Preparatory children. However, the children in Grades 1/2 had more opportunities to produce elicited utterances provided by the teacher. Therefore, the proportion of voluntary speech in Grade 1/2 turned out to be less than that of the Preparatory class (cf. Table 7).

Table 7: Discourse context (Elicited/Voluntary)

Subject	Grade	Total number of L2 utterances	Elicited		Voluntary	
			N	%	N	%
Science	Prep.	83	48	57.8	35	42.2
	G1/2	110	70	67.3	40	32.7

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The children produced voluntary speech for a number of reasons. With regard to the subject content, they made voluntary speech because they wanted to ask questions, to confirm the teacher's instruction, to show their understanding or knowledge, to make comments, or to share their ideas. They also produced L2 utterances voluntarily due to pragmatic reasons, such as needing glue, complaining about a peer's behaviour, asking for permission to go to the toilet, or just wanting to obtain the teacher's attention. However, in such cases, if the L2 was beyond their knowledge, they simply used English without hesitation. Furthermore, although the expressions that they tried out in L2 were not small in number, they were rather limited with regard to their lexical range.

Voluntary utterances were further examined to determine whether they were repetition or non-repetition. As a result, it was found that 28.6% of the voluntary speech was repetition of the teacher's utterance in the Preparatory class, and 32.5% for the Grades 1/2 class. Voluntary utterances which were non-repetition can be classified as follows in terms of their functions:

- to give one's idea or state one's knowledge in relation to the subject content. These were mostly one or two words consisting of a noun or adjective, but phrases and sentences were occasionally used, such as, *Gyuunyuu no nioi* (It smells like milk);
- to ask a question, for example, *Gyuunyuu?* (Is that milk?);
- to request songs;

- to interact with a peer for a pragmatic reason, for instance, *suwatte* (sit down);
- to thank or apologize;
- to catch the teacher's attention; and,
- to play with a word. This was produced as "private speech" to talk to oneself (Vygotsky 1978; Saville-Troike 1988) without interaction or to play with one's peer; for example, *sukoshi sukoshi* (a little bit, a little bit).

It is also worth noting that some of elicited repetitions emerged as voluntary speech to convey their own meaning, as Kanagy and Igarashi observed in their study (1997).

The role of repetition and formulaic utterances

From class observations and data analysis, two types of children's L2 utterances emerged as important factors that seem to have impact on their L2 acquisition in the early stage of the immersion program. They are repetition and formulaic expressions. Repetition seemed to play an important role for L2 development in immersion classes, while non-repetition became a larger part of their L2 as the program progressed. The children produced a number of repetitions in the class spontaneously or as a result of elicitation. On a number of occasions, the children were observed repeating a certain expression and then producing the same one as an original utterance after a while in a different context. Voluntary

repetition was particularly observed with the children who seemed to be effective learners of L2. Repetition can be one of the essential factors of natural acquisition in immersion programs. Thus, immersion teachers can be advised to continuously encourage the children to repeat the teachers' L2, whenever relevant.

Formulaic expressions and routines provided the children with the opportunity to participate in class activities and to engage in social interaction in immersion classes. Formulaic and routine expressions were also used by the children in a different situation to the original one in order to convey their own meaning. The children used such expressions as they were or with some modification, for instance, transferring a different word to the sentence pattern. As Swain and Lapkin, and Ellis claim, formulaic and creative speech are not separate but are polar ends of a continuum (Ellis 1984; Swain and Lapkin 1995).

Conclusion

It is believed that immersion children acquire L2 in the context of learning the subject content using the medium of L2. Outcome of their L2 has been researched to date and the results generally indicate immersion learners' superiority to the learners in the traditional L2 classes (Baker 1993; Berthold 1995). However, we know little about the features and processes of young immersion children's L2 development in immersion classrooms. It is a difficult task to investigate how children develop L2 skills, since

language development is a more internal process rather than an external one. We can thus only capture the process of learners' L2 development from careful observation as it manifests itself through their discourse. In the present study, the children showed their development of Japanese language skills by verbal and non-verbal production. They produced a number of Japanese utterances and also indicated their understanding or their intention by nodding, shaking his/her head, pointing to objects or even using English.

In this study, it became apparent that the young children produce quite a large volume of L2, despite their focus always being on sense-making in the Science classes. It appears that they acquire L2 to a certain extent, while learning subject content by responding to the teacher's questions and making a number of comments and questions, just as the children do in non-immersion classes.

Most of the children's L2 output were one or two words and formulaic expressions. However, we also observed that they tried out the learned expressions to convey their own meanings spontaneously. The level of spontaneity to repeat and to produce original L2 was quite high. These findings are similar to those of my previous study (Hagino 2000) and Kanagy and Igarashi's (1997) research.

From this study, it appears that repetition and formulaic expressions play

an important role for the young children. These types of utterances provide the children with opportunities not only to participate in social interactions but also to develop L2 in immersion classrooms. It was observed that the children's original utterances emerged out of repetitions and formulaic expressions. This finding supports Kanagy and Igarashi's argument, that is 'research based on a syntactic view of language has sometimes undervalued the role of routines and patterns in early L2 acquisition (Kanagy and Igarashi 1997:262). Further investigation on how repetition and formulaic expressions play a role for the children's early L2 development will provide a useful approach not only in immersion programs but also in L2 education.

The use of L1 by learners has been an issue in Australian immersion programs (Clyne 1986; Clyne et al. 1995). In this study, it also became evident that although the children produced quite a large amount of Japanese, they also used a considerable volume of English. The use of English particularly occurred when the children were enthusiastic about expressing their ideas and opinions during classroom activities. In the immersion class at the school, the use of English is accepted in communication with the teachers, although the use of Japanese is always encouraged. Consequently, the realization of acceptance of the use of English by the teacher may have sent the message to the children to use English rather than trying to speak in Japanese all the time. However, the use of English is a difficult issue because, in immersion programs, the

teachers need to accomplish the objectives of the subject content as well as to promote the children's L2. The children, in particular, at the first stage of the immersion program might need to use English to complement their lack of L2 skills in order to communicate with the teacher, to accomplish the classroom tasks and also to monitor their oral receptive skills of Japanese (that is, to confirm their understanding of the teacher's instruction). Accordingly, this issue needs greater attention in future research. Careful and realistic consideration is especially required for partial immersion programs such as the target program where the children are only exposed to L2 for 30% of the school curriculum. It is desirable, however, to prevent the use of L1 by the learners from becoming habitual by encouraging the children to use L2 at every possible opportunity.

It is hoped that this study provides an understanding of the features of young children's L2 oral production and some indications of how they acquire L2 in Japanese immersion classrooms. In order to further develop immersion programs in Australia, it is essential to investigate current programs not only by evaluating the outcomes but also by examining the developmental process occurring in actual immersion classes. Classroom research thus needs to be undertaken to a greater extent in immersion research. Further investigation in immersion classrooms will provide answers as to how best we can promote the children's L2 in immersion programs.

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